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ABSTRACT

The need for the systemic development of principals, vice-principals, and administrators in central offices is discussed. This paper is intended to inform and inspire decision makers to plan, implement, and continuously revise systemic professional development activities for school administrators. Leadership is a skill that can be nurtured and developed; development of leadership can be fostered by coaching and mentoring, through networks, or within study groups. In the past, administrators have expressed disappointment in the degree of relevance and impact of inservice programs, usually because such programs were treated as afterthoughts. For effective professional development, the existing paradigms must change. New programs must be designed around outcome and performance indicators. The challenge is to adopt new approaches to professional development that draw on current research. In conclusion, the changing context of education creates a need for a different type of school leadership, where leaders can put into practice the educational theories of teaching and learning. (RJM)

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Professional Development for Educational Leaders

by Monica Mann*

A great deal of research has been done on the need for systemic professional development for teachers. Less prevalent are articles and research on the need for systemic professional development for educational leaders. As a teacher's knowledge, skills and attitudes are most important to student learning, so are those of an educational leader to a learning organization.

This paper focuses on the need for systemic professional development for school level administrators such as principals and vice-principals, but does not exclude administrators in central office and in higher levels of education.

Pacific entities such as Chuuk and Palau do not have a certification program for school level administrators. Most principals have a college degree, ranging from an associate's to a master's degree. Principals in some of the entities are sent to workshops, seminars and conferences. Enrollment at workshops is dependent on the availability of funds and the discretion of the directors. If there is a vacancy for a principal, the central office staff usually reviews the records of exemplary teachers. The selection is typically done by the local Department of Education which may or may not seek input from parents and community members.

The Hawai'i School Leadership Academy and PREL have coordinated a mentor training program where principals may come to Hawai'i for three weeks to three months and "shadow" an exemplary principal. They learn by observing and dialoguing with the administrator as they perform their daily functions and responsibilities. Debriefing sessions are scheduled with the mentoring principals and a retired district superintendent. The "shadowing" experience has been evaluated as being very successful. However, there are few or no follow-up activities once the principal returns home.

In Hawai'i, a prospective administrator must qualify for the "Cohort Leadership" program by taking the Miller's Analogy Test, a written exam, and submitting a recommendation from a previous supervisor. This is followed by a summer of rigorous training with oral, written and research components included. The training program is followed by a year at a school with a veteran principal serving as mentor. University courses in educational administration are also required and infused within the department requirements. A cohort participant must complete a school improvement plan and several written and oral requirements prior to receiving a school administrator's certificate.

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Once certified, the professional development of a school level administrator is a personal one. It usually includes a potpourri of meetings, workshops and periodic conferences. Professional development is typically a combination of required meetings on operational matters and informational sessions. Depending on budget and time allowed, a principal may have the opportunity to attend national conferences. Districts design different professional development opportunities depending again on need, funding constraints and the ability to squeeze activities into the already full schedule of the administrators.

This Briefing Paper is to inform and inspire decisionmakers to plan, implement and continuously revise systemic professional development activities for school administrators. The term "systemic" is used because initiatives must be linked with everything else, so that principals see how it all fits together. Many times, trendy new topics are introduced because it is the latest "buzzword" in education and activities are scheduled because "that's the thing to do." Links to previous initiatives are rarely seen, therefore the attitude of "this too shall pass" creeps in.

Leadership is a skill that can be developed and nurtured. It is also a craft and a profession that needs constant care and support. In the book, *Leaders of the Future*, Peter Drucker rejects the notion that personality or charisma is what characterizes an effective leader. The author has conducted studies that have convinced him that leaders are made. Leaders focus on their mission and develop strong relationships to convince others to follow them.

Drucker has identified four characteristics of leaders:

- A leader has followers. A leader cannot lead unless someone chooses to follow.
- Effective leaders are not necessarily loved or admired. Popularity does not dictate leadership—results do.
- Leaders set examples because they know they are highly visible.
- Leadership is not about rank, privilege, title or money. It is about responsibility.

Because leaders are so important to an organization, they deserve to be treated as such. There needs to be a greater investment in more relevant professional development as well as more support. Support can take the form of coaching, mentoring, networks or study groups. It can also be given in the dedication of time and funds.

Shifting Paradigm of Professional Development

(adapted from NCREL's Brief on Professional Development: Changing Times)

Administrators often are disappointed in the degree of relevance and impact of inservice programs. This disappointment has been due mainly to the traditional assumptions that have driven these programs, which include the following:

- Periodic inservice time is usually scheduled between operational meetings and deemed sufficient to introduce principals to new ideas and to improve their leadership skills.
- Professional development may be seen as a remedial practice.
- The goal of professional development is to transfer knowledge and discrete skills from "experts" to principals.

- The most effective way for principals to learn is for them to listen to a speaker.
- Professional development is more a luxury than an essential element of a district's educational program.
- Professional development is time and resource consuming and principals are too busy to attend sessions.

Programs based on these traditional assumptions are viewed as add-ons to the regular day. Frequently, principals are penalized for being out of the school for attending professional development activities.

Looking at research and best practice in professional development, a totally different set of assumptions are operating. These include, but are not limited to:

- Ongoing professional development is required if it is to result in significant change.
- School change is the result of individual and organizational development.
- The goal of professional development is to support the inquiry into and study of teaching and learning.
- Principals learn as a result of training, practice, feedback, as well as individual reflection and group inquiry into their practice.
- Professional development is essential to school development.
- Professional development should be primarily school-focused and embedded on the job.

Examples

The California School Leadership Academy (CSLA) programs are designed around outcomes and performance indicators. Participants understand that they are accountable for making progress in the program as evidenced by program performance assessments appropriate to each program. The School Leadership Team program offers 10-15 days of seminars, approximately 6 hours in length, over a 2-3 year period. Team members engage in an equal number of intersession workdays at the school site.

An example of indicators follows:

"Educators will create an environment in which all individuals are able to articulate a vision of powerful learning, describe its characteristics and cause conditions to promote it."

"Educators will shape a culture in which norms, values, and beliefs manifest powerful learning."

"Educators will create a diversity-sensitive environment grounded in multicultural and linguistic multiplicity which is tolerant of racism and exclusion."

In a recent article in the newsletter, *Teaching in Educational Administration*, Hallinger and Bridges write about the merits of "Problem-Based Leadership Development." The advantages of problem-based learning (PBL) have primarily been cited in the medical field where the knowledge base is changing rapidly. Like a

doctor, the educational administrator needs to spend time understanding the problem prior to consulting others and finding appropriate resources. This allows the professional to be a more effective and responsible decisionmaker.

The PBL is imbedded in a curriculum which includes the following:

- Familiarize prospective leaders with the problems they are likely to face in the future.
- Acquaint cohorts with the knowledge that is relevant to these high-impact problems.
- Foster skills in applying this knowledge.
- Develop problem solving skills.
- Develop skills in implementing solutions.
- Develop leadership that facilitate collaboration.
- Develop an array of affective capabilities.
- Develop self-directed learning skills.

The Challenge

New approaches to professional development for educational leaders are critical as curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices are aligned with research on teaching and learning. According to research, students learn by actively constructing new knowledge in a holistic way and connecting with their prior experiences. These findings call into question traditional curricula that focus on the transfer of discrete and fragmented knowledge and skills from principals to teachers to students.

In the fall 1996 issue of the *Professional Development Newsletter* published by ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), Hawley and Valli write about a "new consensus" that is emerging concerning professional development. This consensus calls for providing collegial opportunities to learn which are linked directly to solving authentic problems. Four converging developments from this new consensus include:

1. Research on school improvement that links change to professional development.
2. Growing agreement that students should be expected to achieve much higher standards of performance, that include a capacity for complex and collaborative problem solving.
3. Research on learning and teaching that reaches conclusions that are substantially different from theories about learning that have shaped contemporary strategies for instruction and assessment.
4. Research confirms the widespread belief among educators that conventional strategies for professional development are ineffective and wasteful, and this justifies the adoption of different ways to facilitate professional learning.

Conclusion

The changing context of education creates both a need for a different type of school leadership and leadership development. School leaders, now and in the future, must be able to:

- apply educational theories of teaching and learning in practice,
- adapt educational policies and practices to the needs of an increasingly diverse student population,
- identify and solve problems and make decisions in a group context with professionals and lay persons,
- apply their understanding of the political and social context of school to decision making inside the school house, and
- develop and sustain humane and effective working environments that foster the leadership and learning of others.

These capacities require application of knowledge of skills and attitudes at the school site. A new outlook is needed on what the preservice and inservice for school administrators will be. As the changes in educational administration and the responsibilities increase, so must the professional development activities and the support provided. The task of "leading" and not just "managing" a school site is enormous and fulfilling if training, development and required support are provided.

Effective leaders have a "ripple" effect impact on staff, teachers, students, parents and ultimately the community. Because the leaders have an important job to do, more should be done to help them.

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